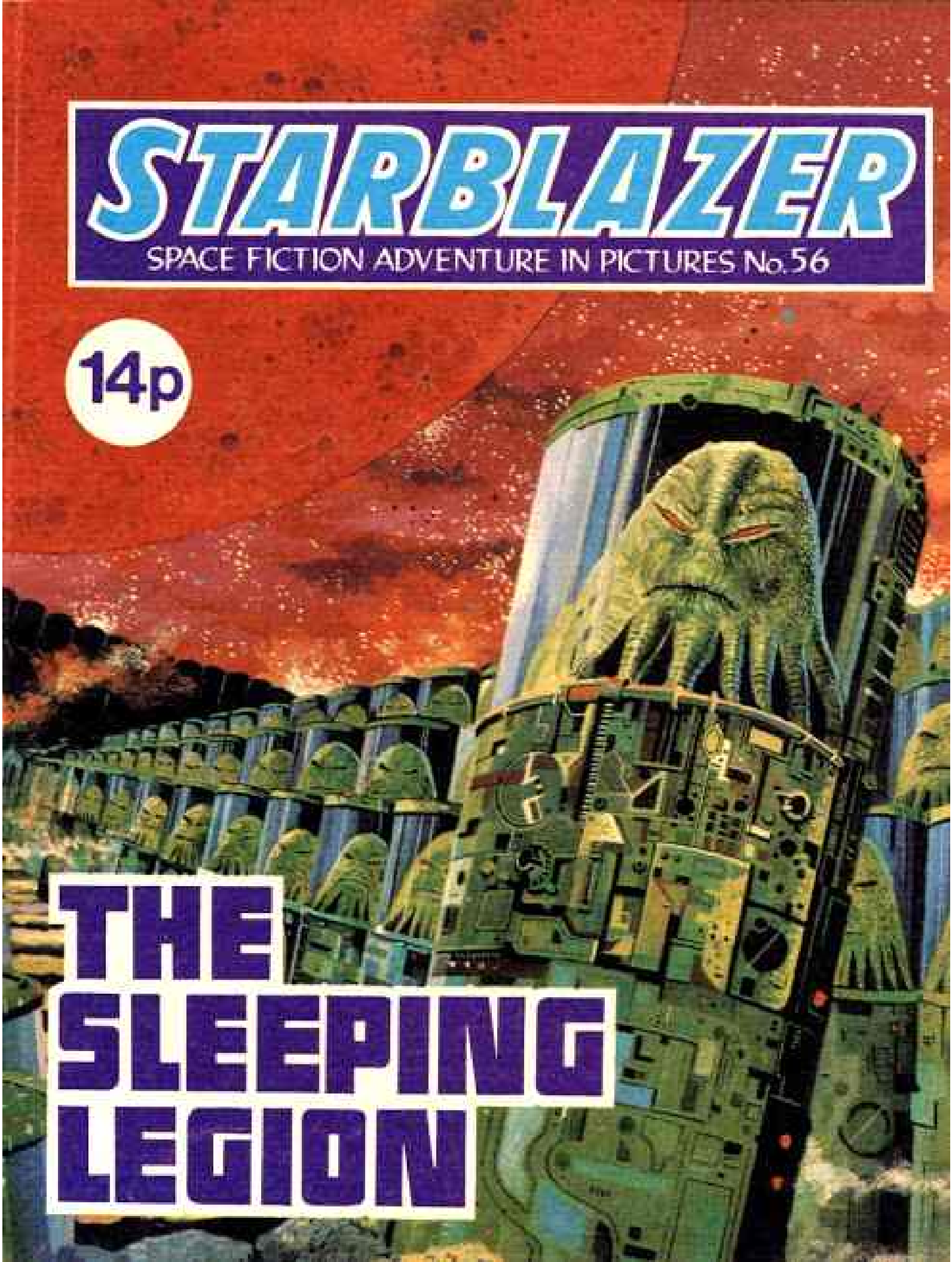
STARBLAZER

SPACE FICTION ADVENTURE IN PICTURES No. 56

14p



THE SLEEPING LEGION

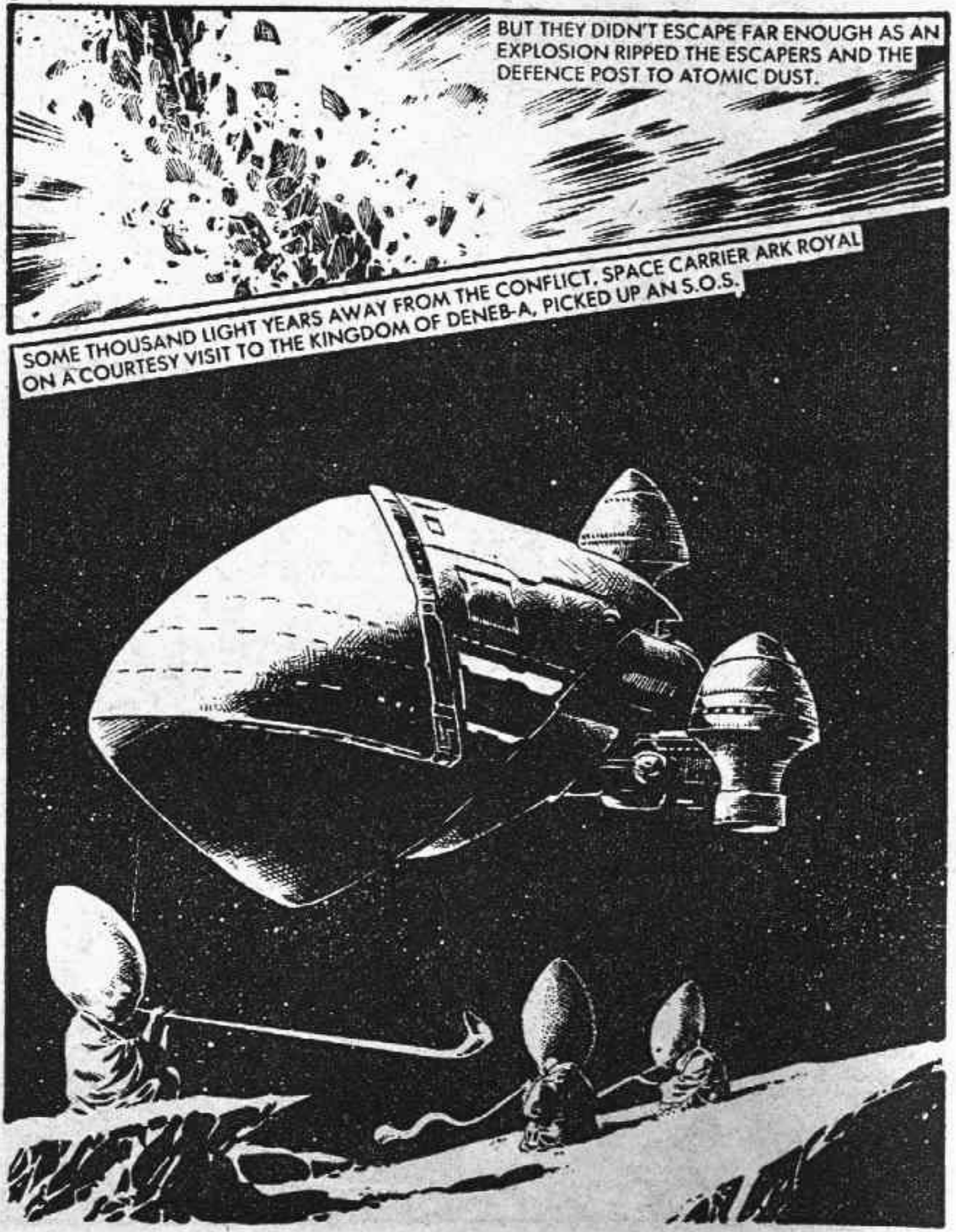
STARBLAZER

BY THE YEAR 3500 SOLAR-POWERED SPACE CRAFT HAD BLAZED MAN ACROSS THE GALAXY. EACH PASSING STAR WAS AN ENERGY SOURCE, CHARGING SOLAR PANELS THAT FED UNBELIEVABLY POWERFUL ENGINES.
THUS WAS THE MILKY WAY EXPLORED UNTIL ONLY THE GALAXIES BEYOND REMAINED A MYSTERY. MAN WAS TOO BUSY FORMING THE GALACTIC COMMONWEALTH TO TAKE UP THIS NEW CHALLENGE, SO UNMANNED PROBES WERE SENT OUTSIDE THE GALAXY. THESE REPORTED THE EXISTENCE OF STRANGE, ALIEN CULTURES, AND ARMED FORTS WERE BUILT AROUND THE GALACTIC PERIMETER IN CASE OF NEED.
BUT. WHEN THESE FORTS WERE EVENTUALLY ATTACKED THEY PROVED USELESS AGAINST THE MIGHT OF THE ALIENS, WHO AT ALL COSTS HAD TO BE PREVENTED FROM ACTIVATING THEIR SLEEPING LEGION.

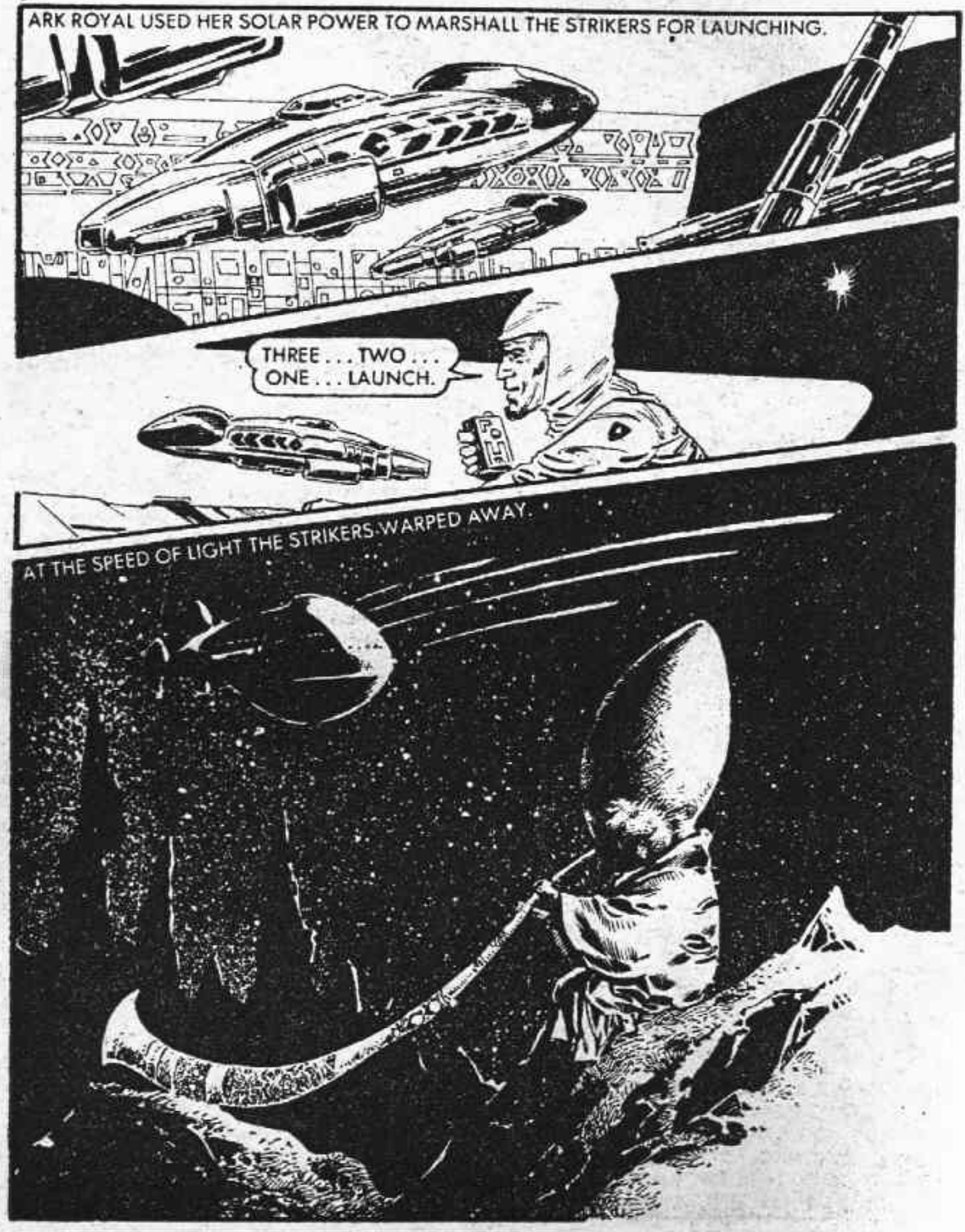
THE SLEEPING LEGION

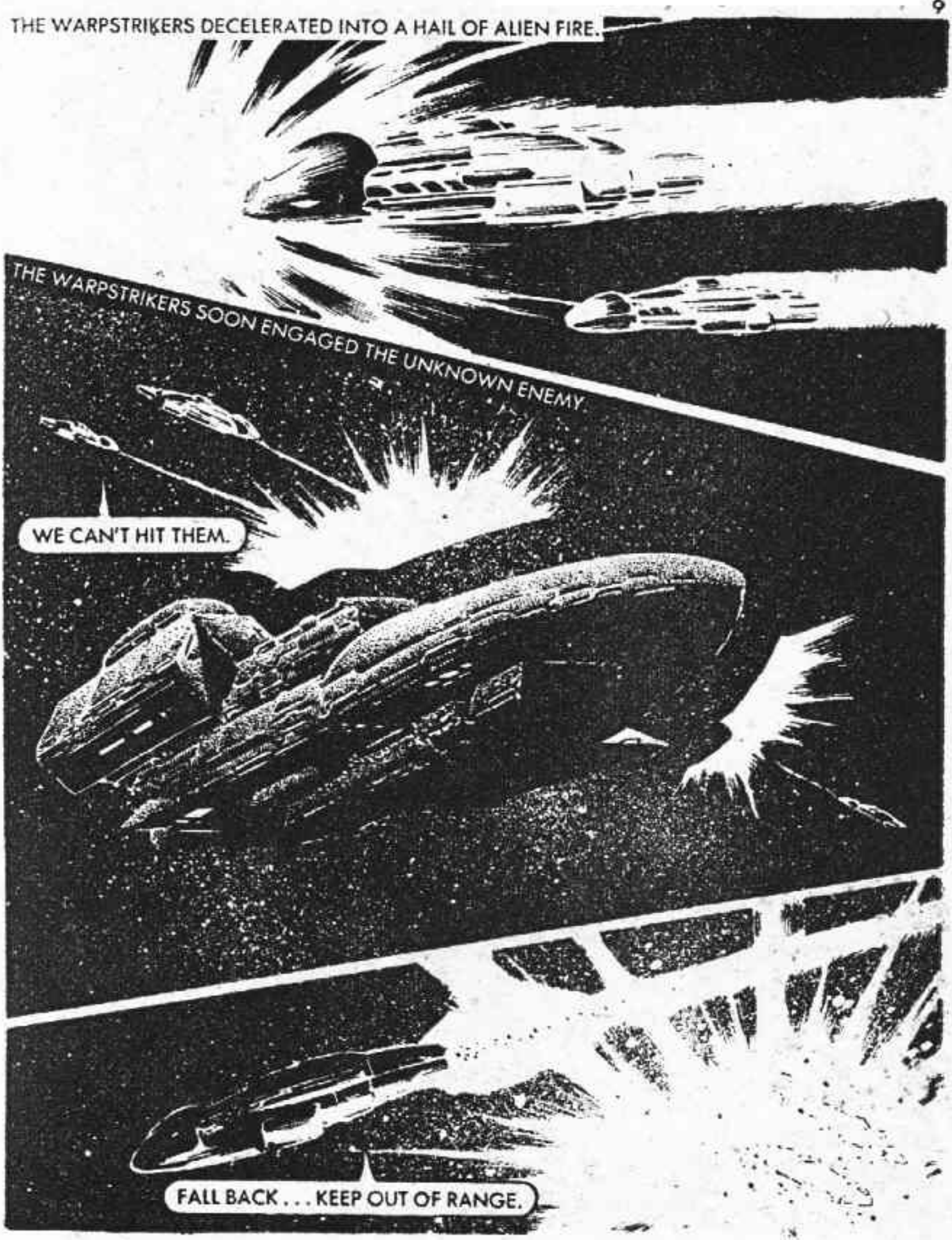
THEY'RE RIPPING US APART.
THEIR DEFLECTOR SHIELDS ARE TOO POWERFUL.

CAPTAIN SPEAKING. WE ARE UNDER HEAVY FIRE AND CANNOT FIRE BACK. ABANDON CRAFT. MAKE FOR LEVEL 2.
AS THE ALIENS RELENTLESSLY TORE THE DEFENCE POST TO PIECES, THE TERRAN SURVIVORS ESCAPED IN LIFEPODS.
MAYDAY
MAYDAY


BUT THEY DIDN'T ESCAPE FAR ENOUGH AS AN EXPLOSION RIPPED THE ESCAPERS AND THE DEFENCE POST TO ATOMIC DUST.
SOME THOUSAND LIGHT YEARS AWAY FROM THE CONFLICT, SPACE CARRIER ARK ROYAL ON A COURTESY VISIT TO THE KINGDOM OF DENEB-A, PICKED UP AN S.O.S.

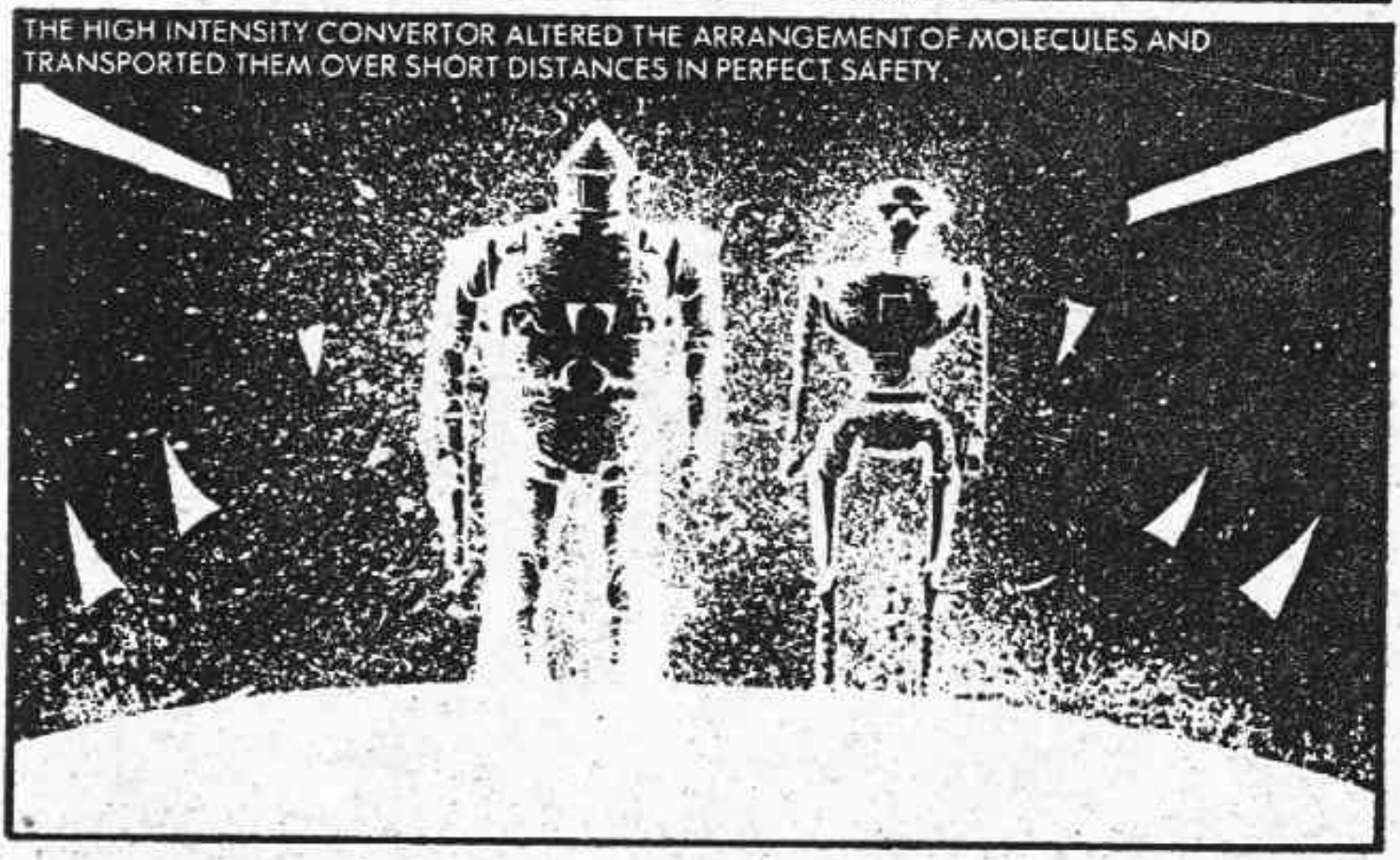
FORT COURAGEOUS IS UNDER ATTACK, CRANE. TAKE A SQUADRON OF WARPSTRIKERS AND INVESTIGATE.
I'LL TAKE UMGO AS WELL.
UNGO WAS AN UNMANNED GALACTIC OBSERVER. THE ROBOT HAD PROBED OUTSIDE THE GALAXY AND UNDERSTOOD THE LIFEFORMS THAT LIVED THERE.


ARK ROYAL USED HER SOLAR POWER TO MARSHALL THE STRIKERS FOR LAUNCHING.
THREE . . . TWO . . .
ONE . . . LAUNCH.
AT THE SPEED OF LIGHT THE STRIKERS WARPED AWAY.


THE WARPSTRIKERS DECELERATED INTO A HAIL OF ALIEN FIRE.
THE WARPSTRIKERS SOON ENGAGED THE UNKNOWN ENEMY.
WE CAN'T HIT THEM.
FALL BACK . . . KEEP OUT OF RANGE.

WE'VE ONLY ONE CHANCE TO BEAT THIS LOT . . . AND THAT'S A PERSONAL VISIT.
I'VE PUT A TOWBEAM ON THE ALIEN CRAFT . . . WE GO WHERE IT GOES. CAN YOU BEAM US ABOARD, UMGO?
AFFIRMATIVE.

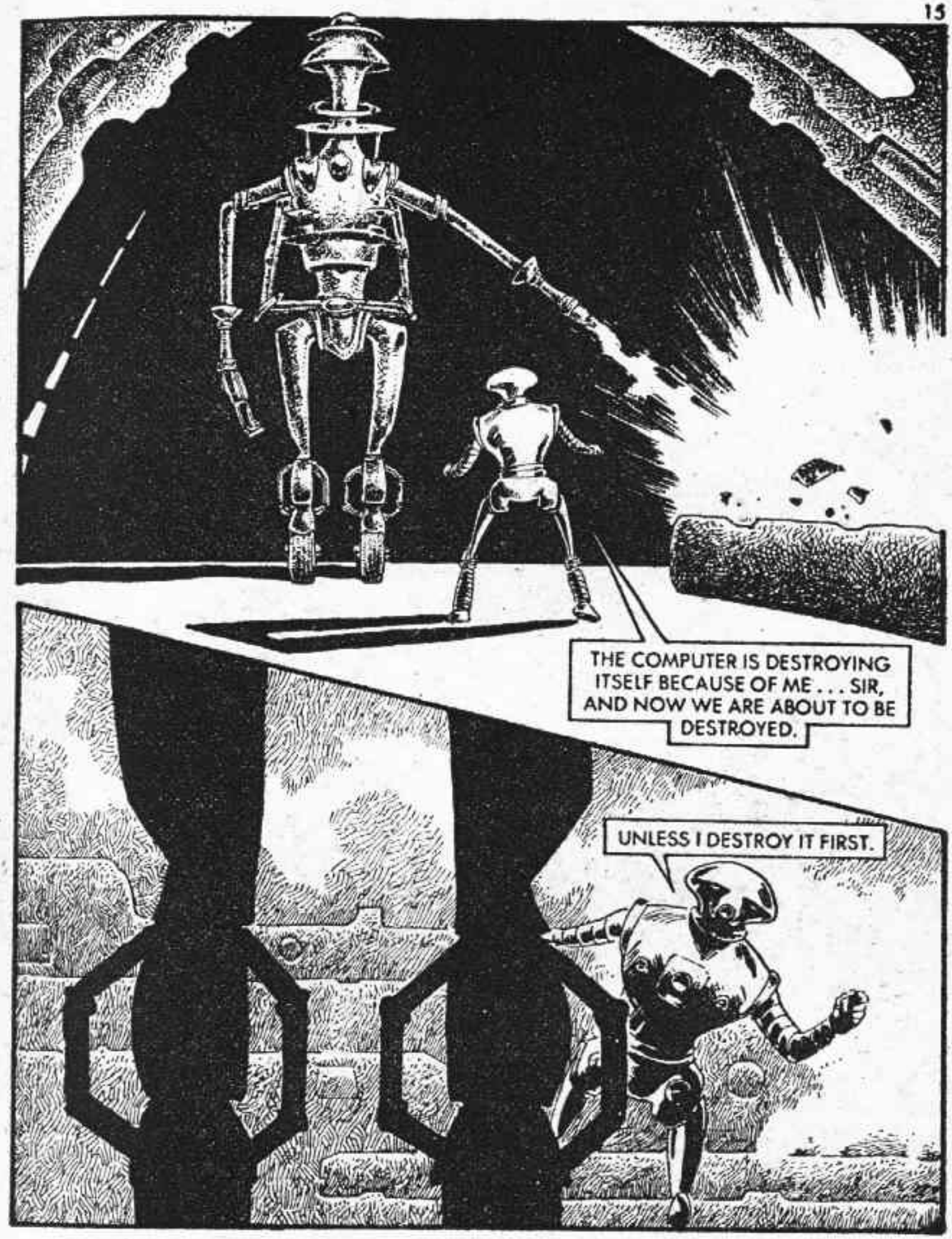
SUIT UP, CRANE. THE MATTER CONVERTOR HAS BEEN ACTIVATED.


THE HIGH INTENSITY CONVERTOR ALTERED THE ARRANGEMENT OF MOLECULES AND TRANSPORTED THEM OVER SHORT DISTANCES IN PERFECT SAFETY.

SAFELY IN THE HOLD, UMGO.

FROM AN ENTRY PORT APPEARED A HIDEOUS ALIEN.

PROBE THE MEMORY BANKS . . . WE'VE GOT TO FIND OUT WHO THIS LOT ARE—AND WHY THEY'RE TRYING TO KILL US.
NEGATIVE . . . THIS COMPUTER WILL NOT RESPOND. IT CLOSES DOWN EACH CIRCUIT AS I TRY TO PROBE.
CRANE . . . WE ARE BEING MONITORED.

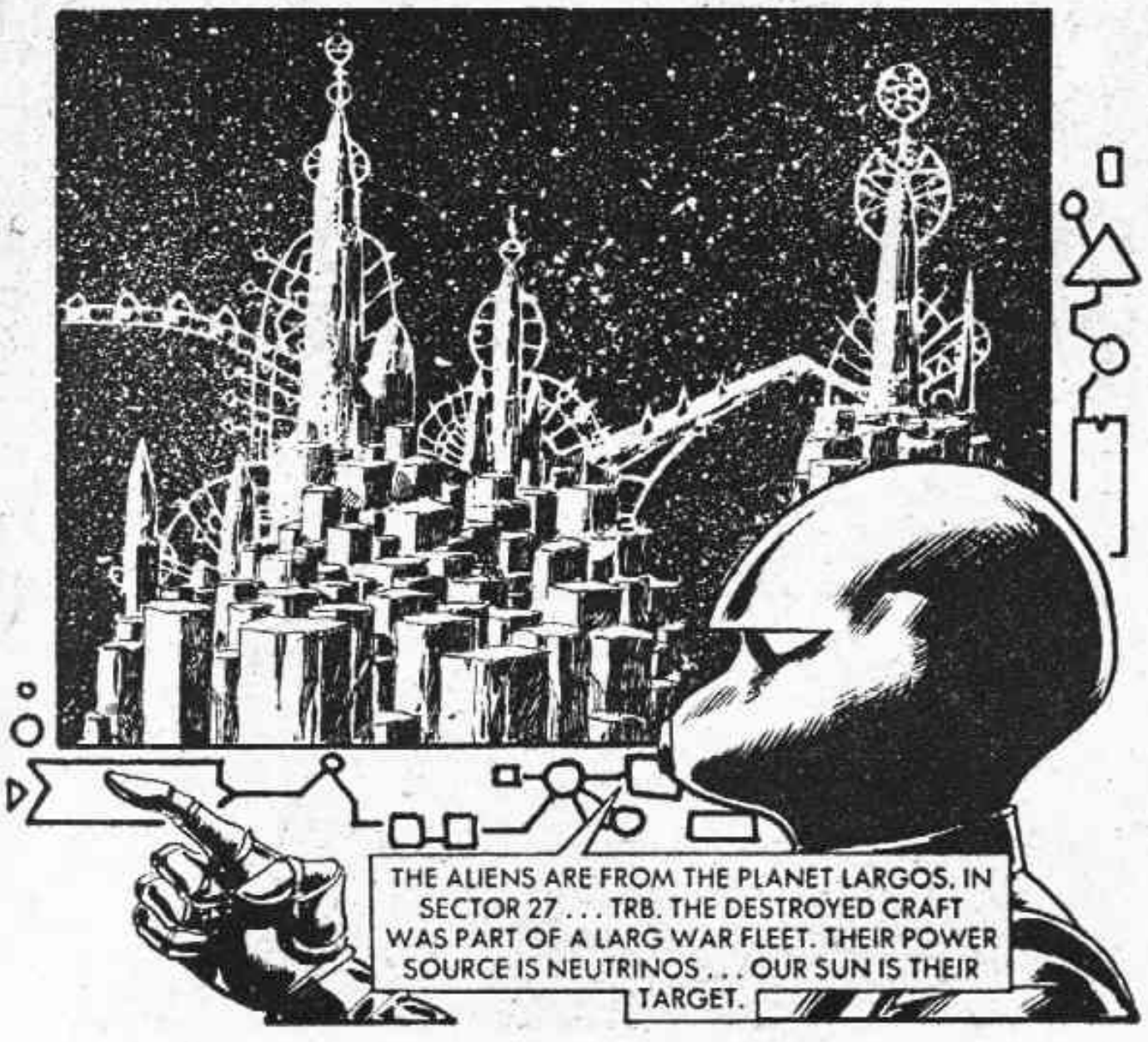

THE COMPUTER IS DESTROYING ITSELF BECAUSE OF ME . . . SIR, AND NOW WE ARE ABOUT TO BE DESTROYED.
UNLESS I DESTROY IT FIRST.

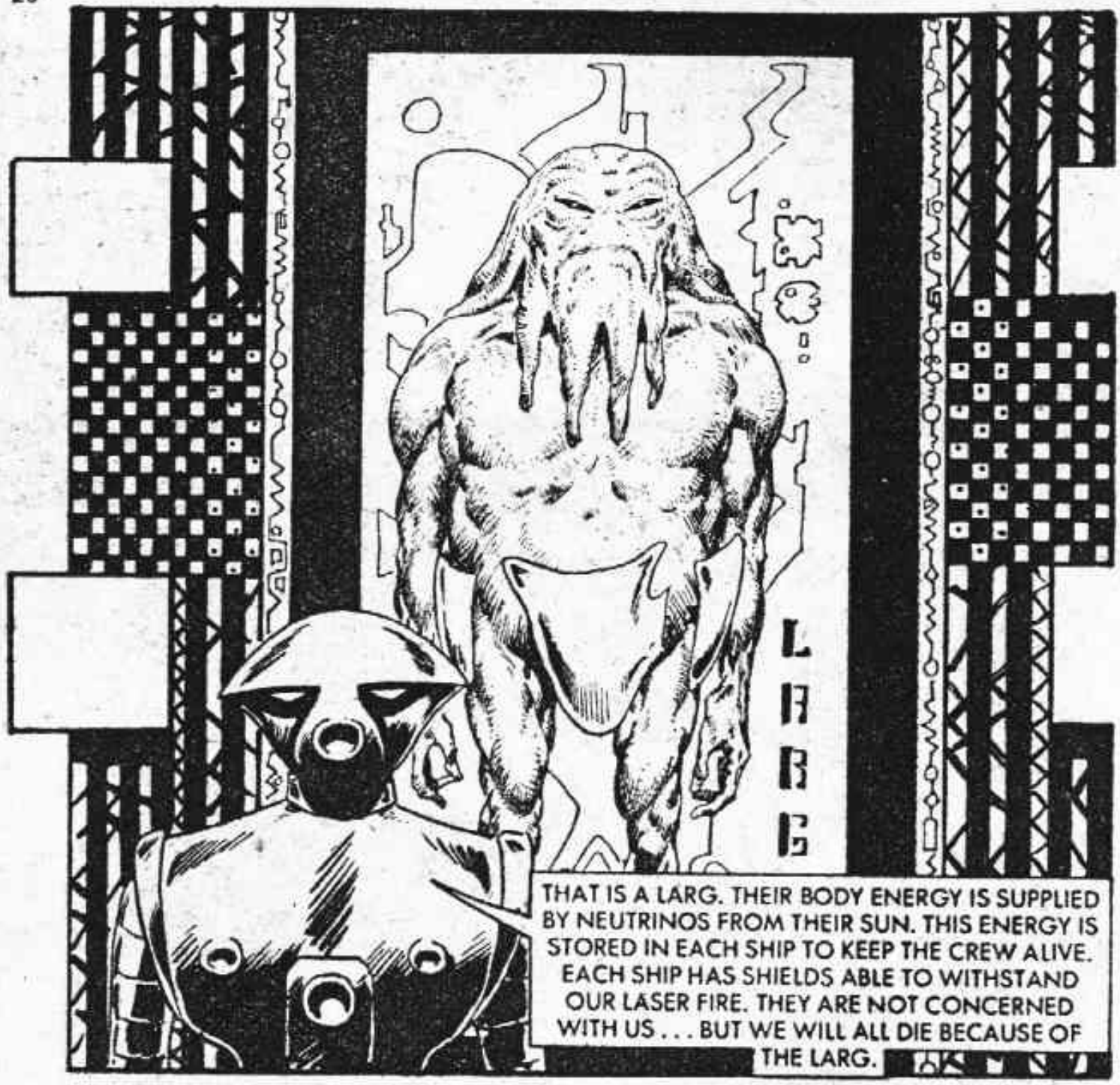
THAT LOOKS LIKE AN AUTODESTRUCT WARNING . . . BEAM US OUT UMGO.
THEY MADE IT TO SAFETY.

THE ALIEN CRAFT EXPLODED, DESTROYING EVERYTHING ABOARD.
A VERY HIGHLY ADVANCED PEOPLE . . . I HAVE NEVER SEEN SUCH A SOPHISTICATED AUTODESTRUCT SYSTEM.
WE DON'T KNOW A THING ABOUT THAT SPACECRAFT.
EXCEPT THAT WE ARE VULNERABLE TO THEIR WEAPON SYSTEM. MY PROBING TRIGGERED AN AUTODESTRUCT.

UMGO—EVEN THEY MUST HAVE FLIGHT RECORDERS . . . SCAN THAT WRECKAGE FOR DEBRIS THAT IS STILL INTACT . . . THE BLACK BOX FLIGHT RECORDER MUST BE ALMOST IN-DESTRUCTABLE.
OBJECT PICKED OUT IN SECTOR BAL DR 29 . . . REF 30 ST B . . . ONLY SUPERFICIAL BURNING . . . COMPUTER INDICATES THAT THE OBJECT CONTAINS A LOW GRADE MAGNETIC OUTPUT . . . PROBABLY COMPUTER TAPE.
THAT MUST BE IT.

THE AUTORETRIEVE WILL PICK IT UP. UMGO, PLOT A COURSE FOR ARK ROYAL.
THE OBJECT WAS THE " BLACK BOX ", AND ARK ROYAL'S COMPUTER ANALYSED THE STORED INFORMATION.


THE ALIENS ARE FROM THE PLANET LARGOS. IN SECTOR 27 . . . TRB. THE DESTROYED CRAFT WAS PART OF A LARG WAR FLEET. THEIR POWER SOURCE IS NEUTRINOS . . . OUR SUN IS THEIR TARGET.

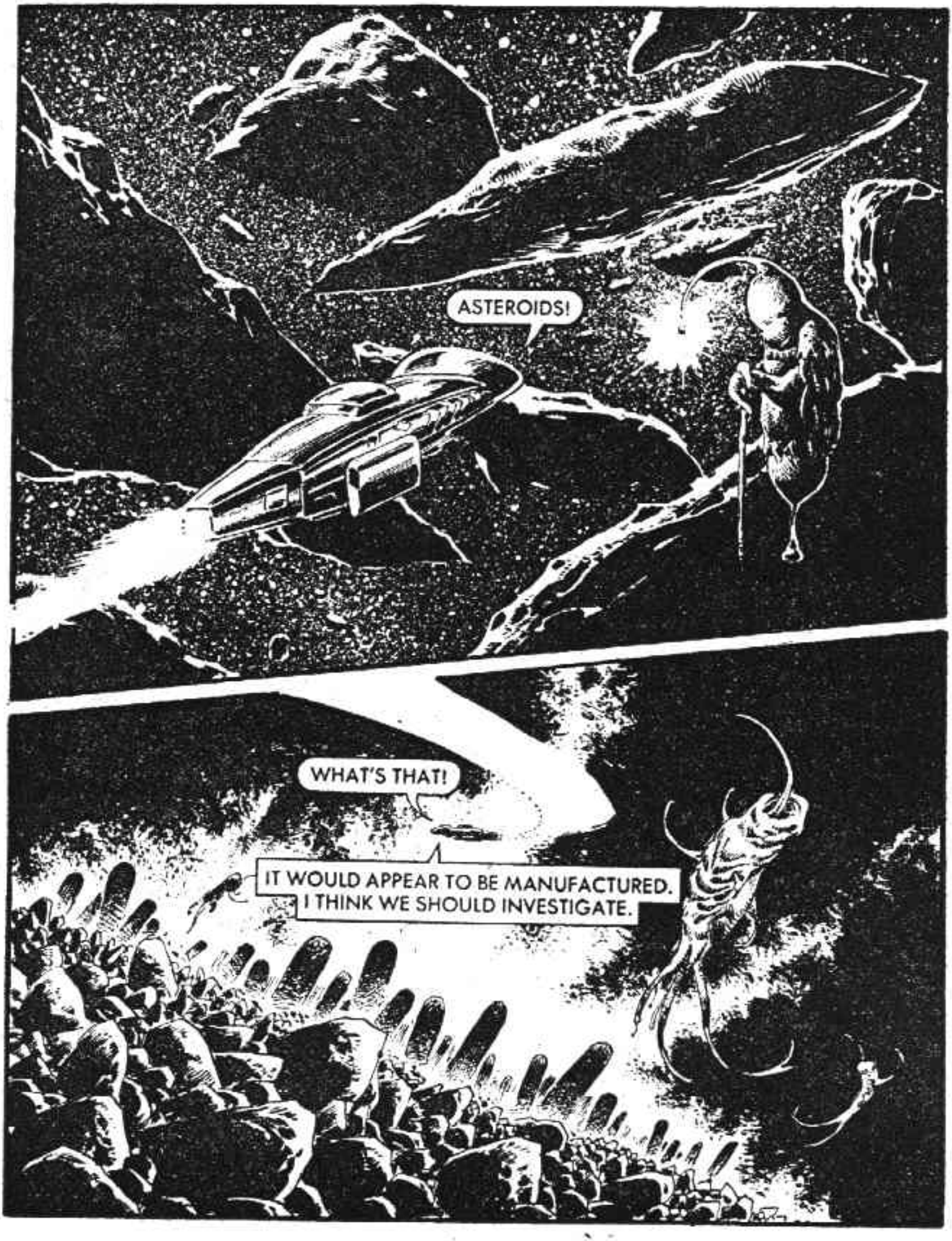

LARG
THAT IS A LARG. THEIR BODY ENERGY IS SUPPLIED BY NEUTRINOS FROM THEIR SUN. THIS ENERGY IS STORED IN EACH SHIP TO KEEP THE CREW ALIVE. EACH SHIP HAS SHIELDS ABLE TO WITHSTAND OUR LASER FIRE. THEY ARE NOT CONCERNED WITH US . . . BUT WE WILL ALL DIE BECAUSE OF THE LARG.

ONCE THE NEUTRINOS ARE DRAINED FROM EARTH'S SUN, ULTRA VIOLET RADIATION WILL ENTER THE ATMOSPHERE AND EVENTUALLY KILL ALL INHABITANTS.

WE KNOW THE LARG FLEET IS SOMEWHERE HERE. WE MUST FIND A WAY TO STOP THEM. CRANE, THAT IS YOUR TASK.
EVERY WARPSTRIKER ABOARD WAS SENT AGAINST THE LARG.
AS NEGOTIATIONS ARE OUT, I SUPPOSE I'LL HAVE TO FIND A WAY.
SET COURSE FOR ZONE 27 . . . TRB.
THE BLACK BOX INDICATED THAT WAS THE ORIGIN OF THE WARCRAFT'S JOURNEY.

AFTER A NUMBER OF INTERSTELLAR HYPER JUMPS.
LEADER TO STRIKE FORCE . . . TURN BACK . . . REPEAT . . . TURN BACK . . . WE HAVE BEEN LED INTO A TRAP. I SHALL TRY TO REGAIN CONTROL.

THE WARPSTRIKERS TURNED SAFELY AS CRANE WAS SUCKED INTO AN UNKNOWN VOID.
I'VE REGAINED CONTROL! BUT WHERE IN JUPITER ARE WE?
I AM COMPUTING AN ANSWER.
THE VOID CONTAINED SOME OF THE STRANGE TRAVELLERS OF SPACE.
WE ARE IN AN AREA OF PURE ENERGY, SIMILAR TO A BLACK HOLE. THIS IS THE BROKEN ARM OF A SPIRAL GALAXY AND WE HAVE BEEN SUCKED INSIDE.


ASTEROIDS!
WHAT'S THAT!
IT WOULD APPEAR TO BE MANUFACTURED. I THINK WE SHOULD INVESTIGATE.

THE TWO SET OUT TO DISCOVER THE SECRET OF THE ASTEROID.
ARE THEY DEAD?
NO! THEY AWAIT LIFE-GIVING NEUTRINOS—THESE CONTAINERS ARE MERELY CRYOGENIC UNITS.

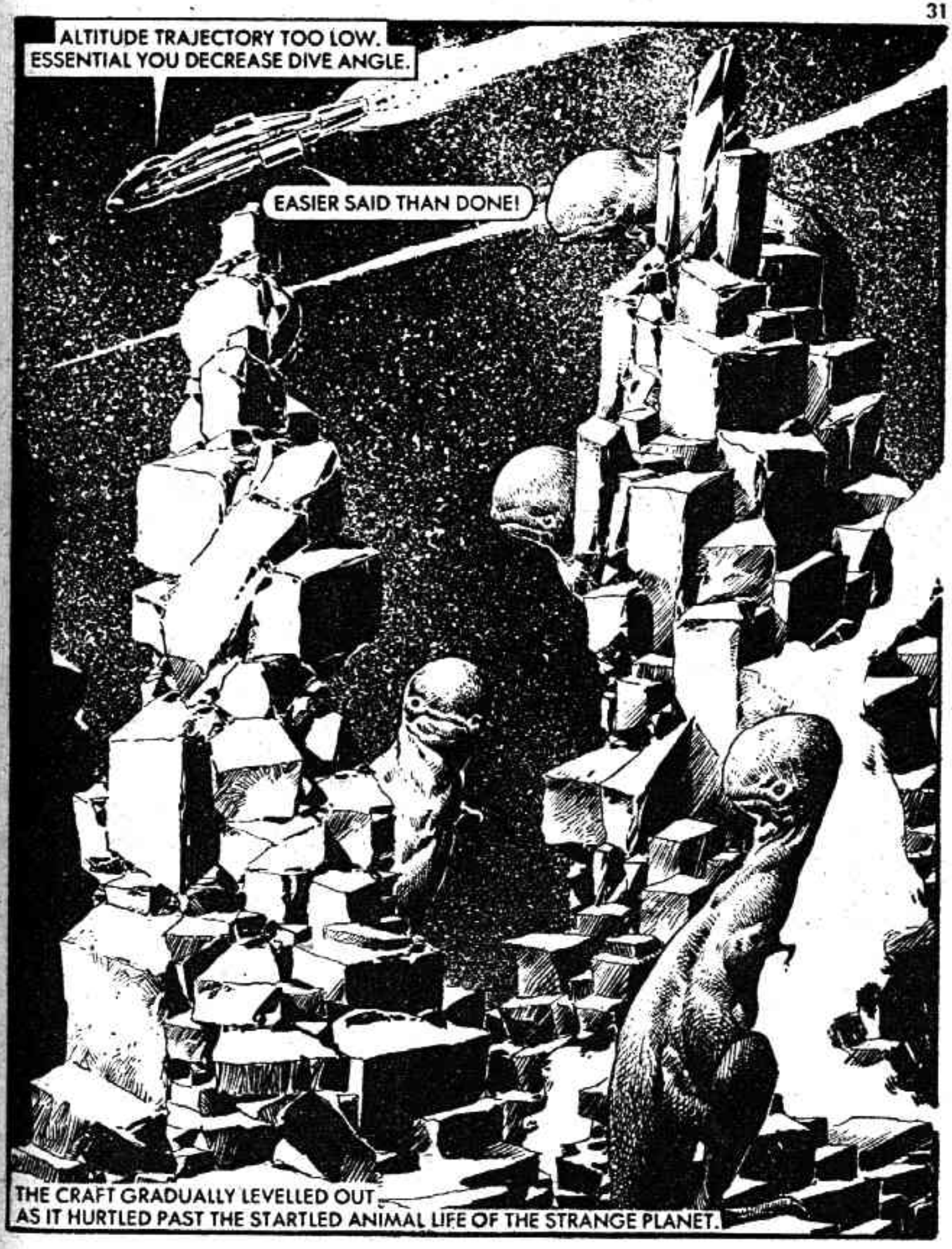
EVERYTHING AWAITS THE MOMENT OF REVIVAL.
JUPE . . . WHAT IS IT?

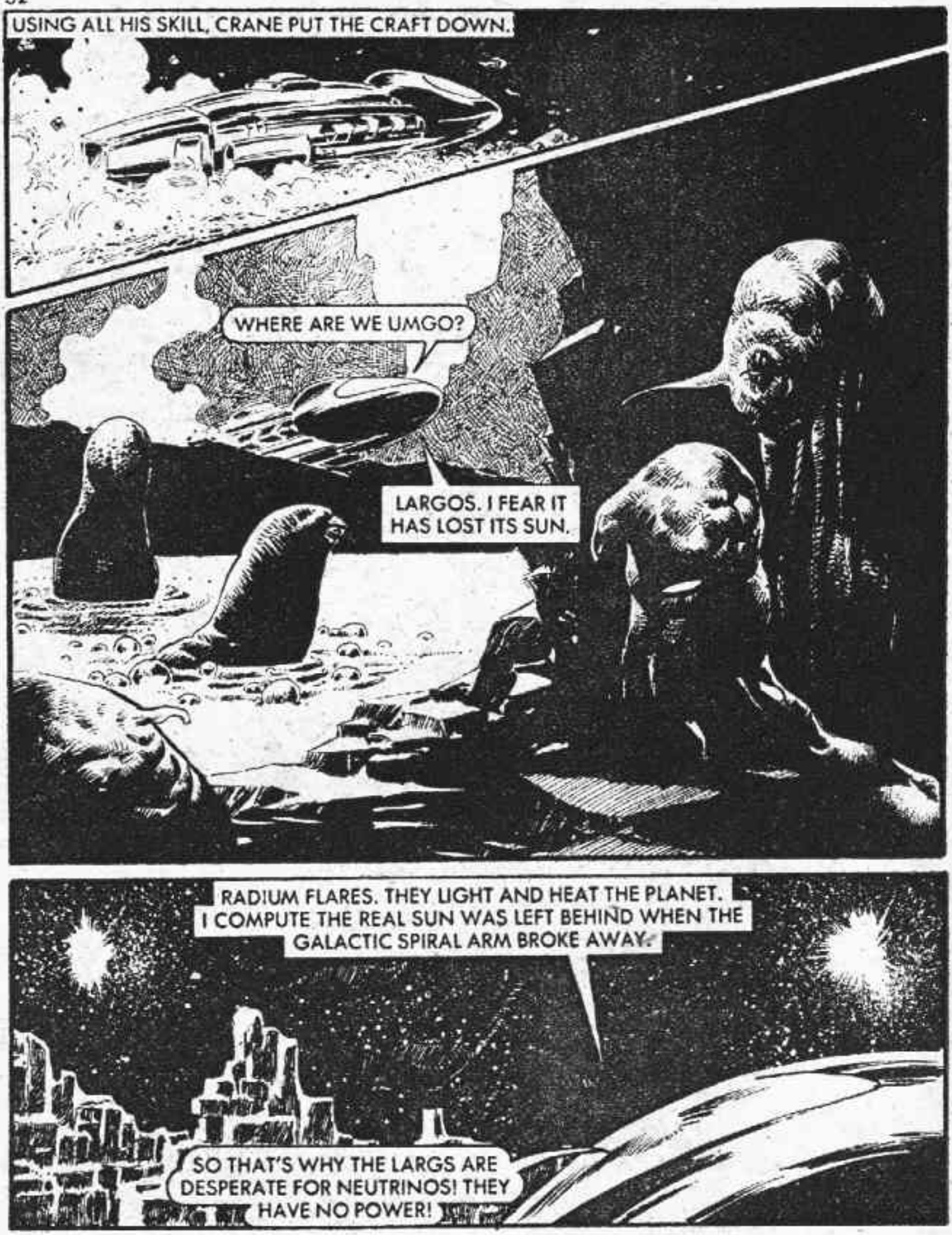
BACK TO THE WARPSTRIKER.
UMGO AND CRANE HEADED FOR THE WARPSTRIKER'S AIRLOCK.

AS THEY ENTERED, GREAT JAWS SWALLOWED THE CRAFT.
CRANE'S INSTRUMENTS WERE USELESS INSIDE THE BLACK INTERIOR OF THE GIANT BIRD.
WHAT'S HAPPENING? SWITCH TO AUXILIARY POWER.
IT LOOKS LIKE A GRAVEYARD.

THE MASSIVE EXPLOSIONS IN THE CONFINED SPACE, RUPTURED THE RECYCLER'S HULL.

THE WARPSTRIKER WAS SHOT OUT AT HIGH SPEED.
STABILIZER MALFUNCTION. FORWARD BOOSTERS OUT OF ACTION. WE MUST LAND QUICKLY.


ALTITUDE TRAJECTORY TOO LOW. ESSENTIAL YOU DECREASE DIVE ANGLE.
EASIER SAID THAN DONE!
THE CRAFT GRADUALLY LEVELLED OUT... AS IT HURTLED PAST THE STARTLED ANIMAL LIFE OF THE STRANGE PLANET.


USING ALL HIS SKILL, CRANE PUT THE CRAFT DOWN.
WHERE ARE WE UMGO?
LARGOS. I FEAR IT HAS LOST ITS SUN.
RADIUM FLARES. THEY LIGHT AND HEAT THE PLANET. I COMPUTE THE REAL SUN WAS LEFT BEHIND WHEN THE GALACTIC SPIRAL ARM BROKE AWAY.
SO THAT'S WHY THE LARGS ARE DESPERATE FOR NEUTRINOS! THEY HAVE NO POWER!

WE WERE OBVIOUSLY SPOTTED.
USING A STANDARD GALACTIC TRANSLATOR PACK, THE LARG SPOKE—
AKZYO . . . PW . . . TRA . . . DROP YOUR BLASTER OR DIE!
MOVE!
THEY'VE DESTROYED UMGO.

CRANE WAS TAKEN TO AN AREA WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF OTHER RACES.
AN INTERNMENT CAMP!
THERE'S NO ESCAPE! THAT ELECTRON FENCE MEANS INSTANT DEATH.

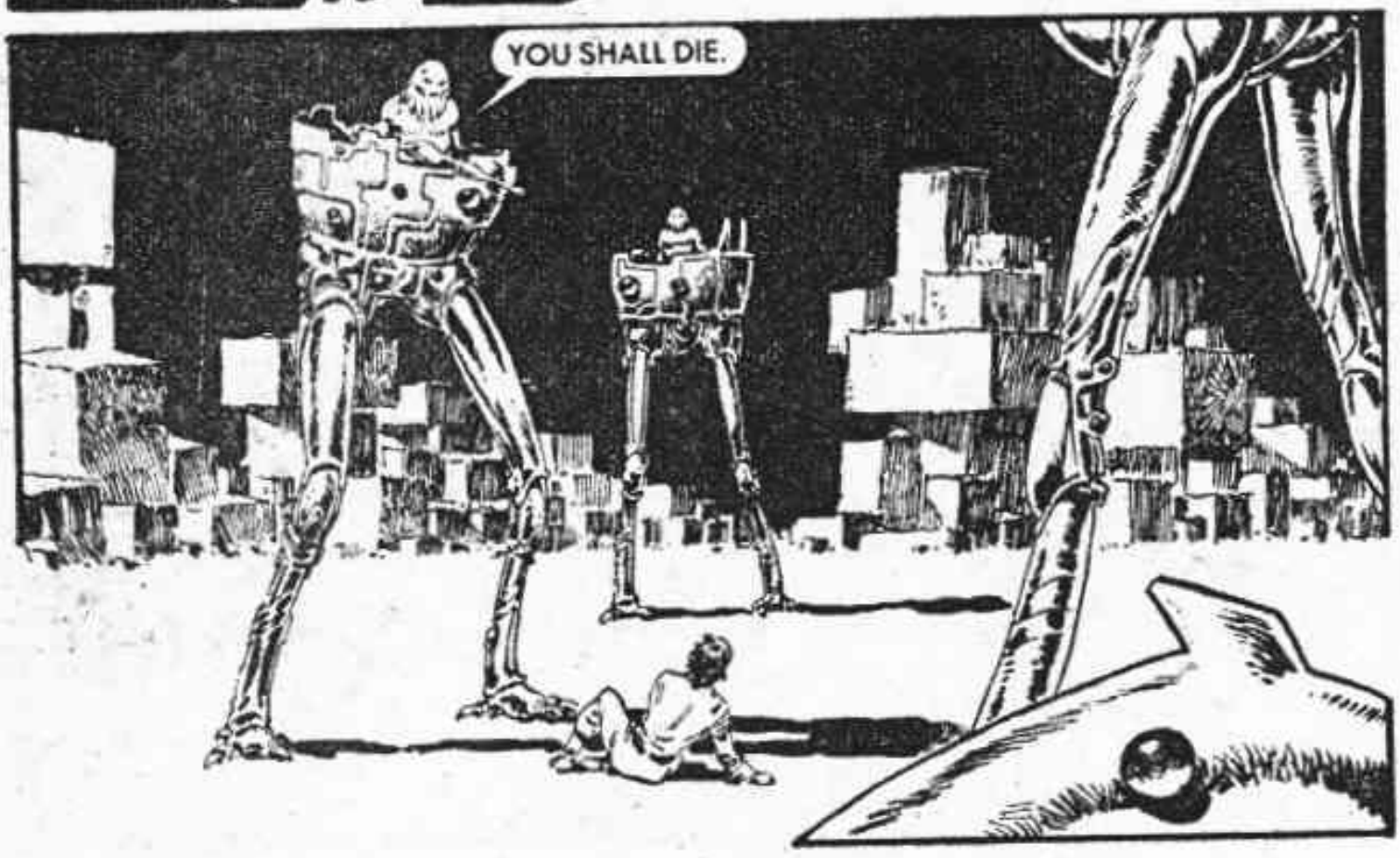
THE CAMP WAS PATROLLED BY LARG GUARDS IN MOBILE WATCH TOWERS.

NOT MUCH CHANCE OF ESCAPE HERE.

WAIT A MOMENT. MAYBE THERE IS . . .

CRANE HIT AN INATTENTIVE LARG AND LEAPT FOR HIS HOVERMOBILE.
STANDARD CONTROLS . . .

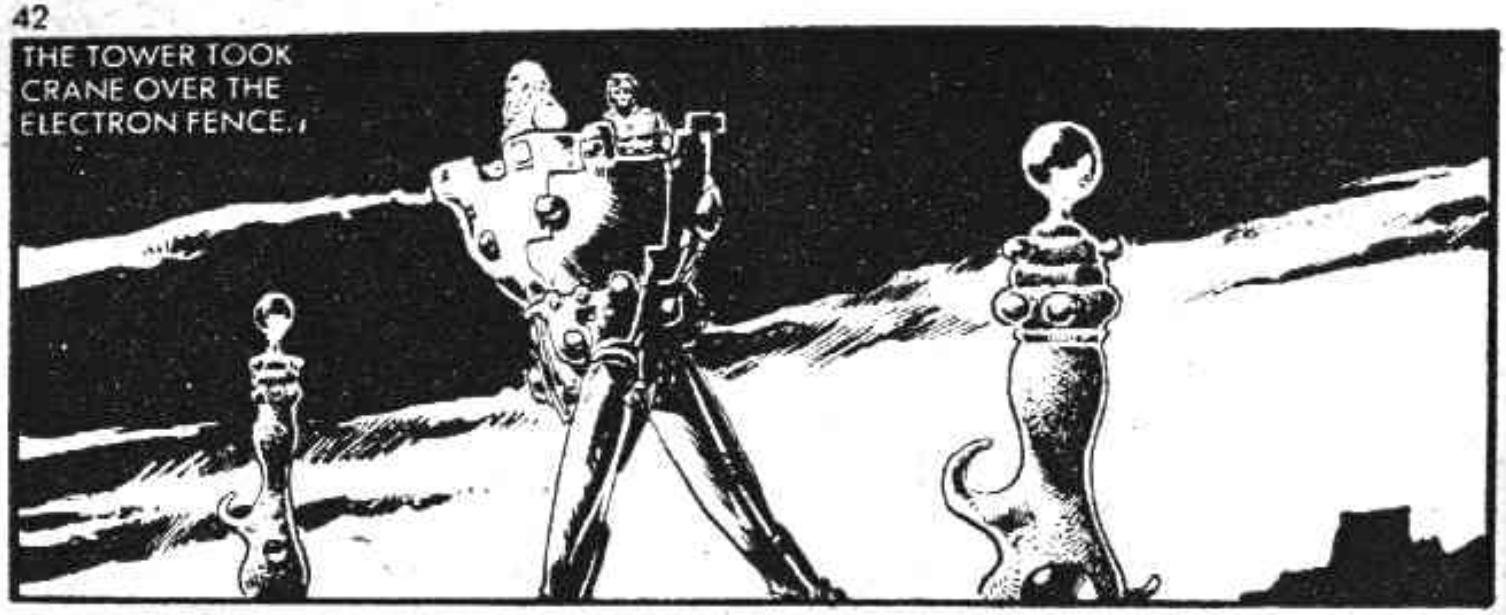
BUT AS CRANE TOUCHED THE CONTROLS
AN AGONISING NEURO SHOCK
WRACKED HIS BODY AS THE SENSORS
FAILED TO RECOGNISE HIS HAND PRINTS.

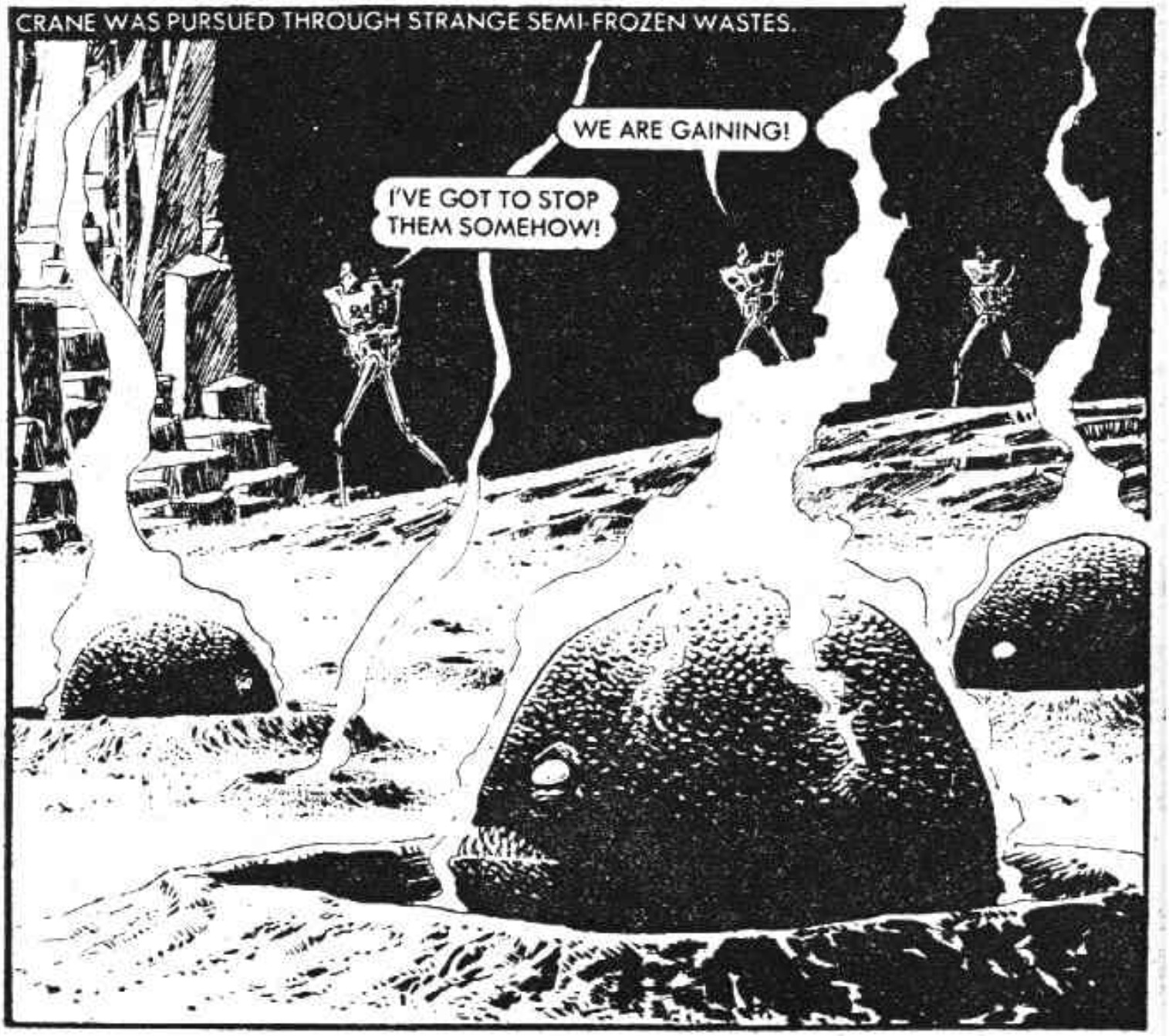


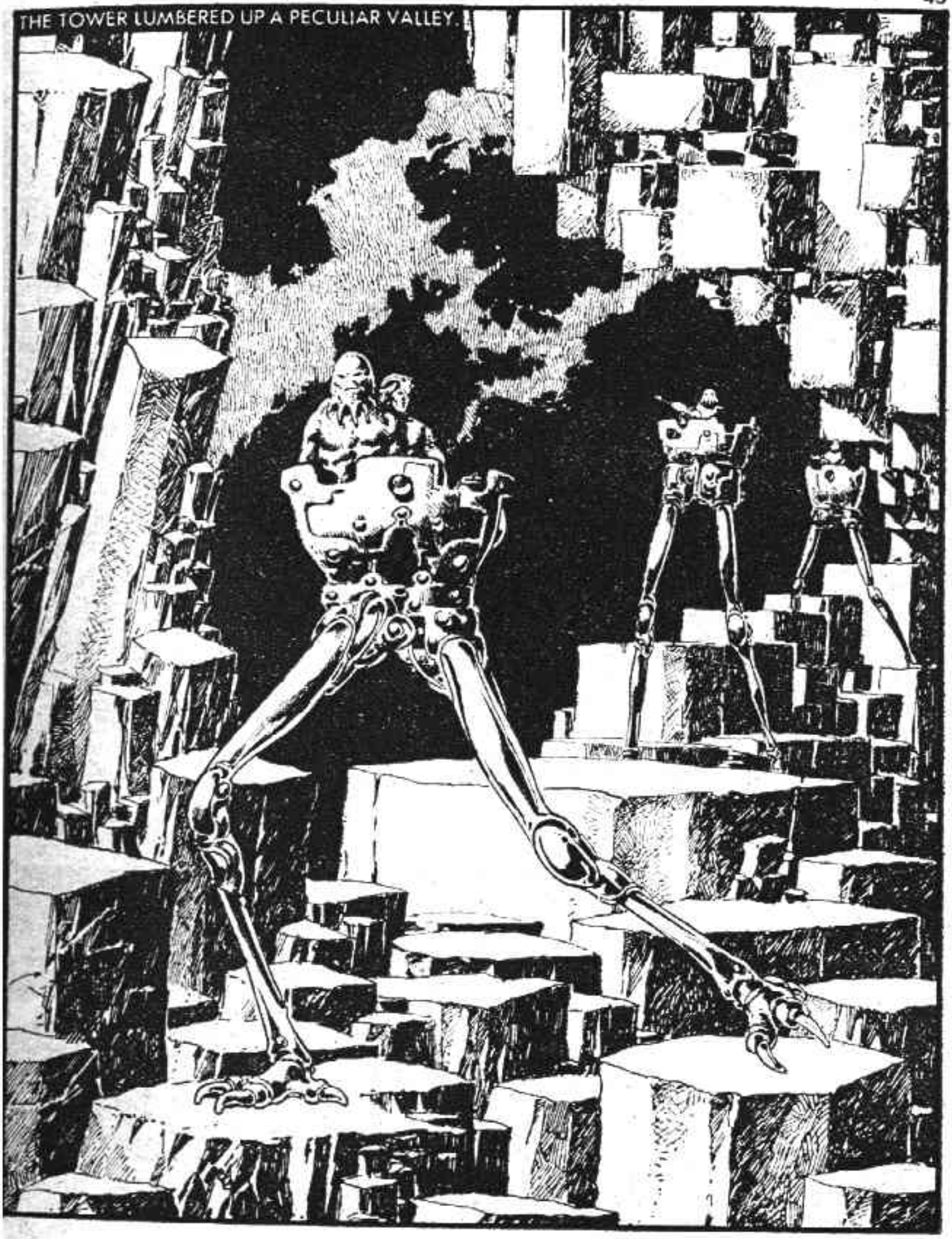
ALL ATTEMPTED ESCAPERS ARE EXECUTED INSTANTLY.
MISSED!

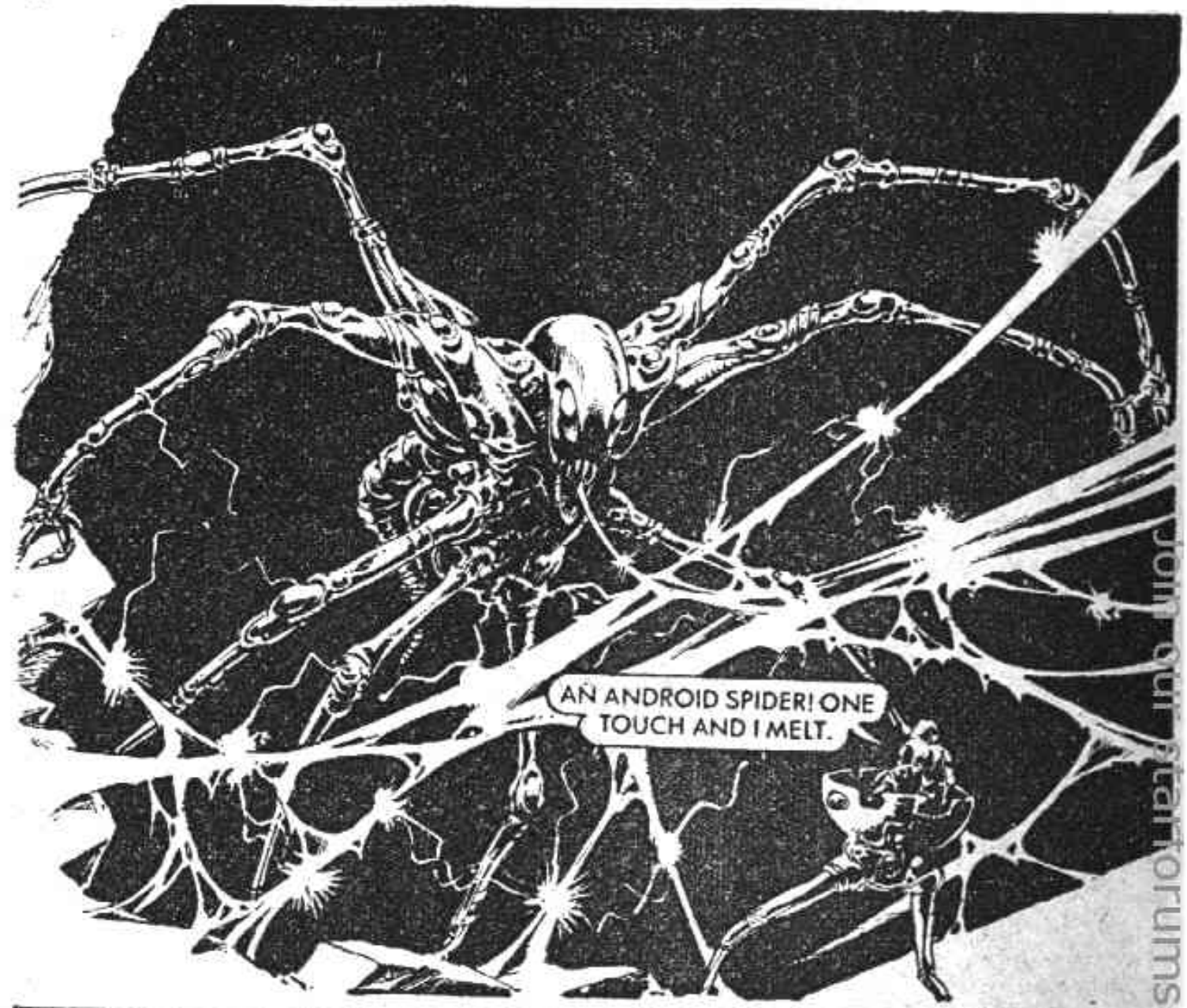
IF I KEEP CLOSE TO THESE LEGS, THE OTHER TOWERS CAN'T RISK FIRING.
CRANE CLIMBED UP A TOWER.
IT'S NOT LOOKING.
THEY'VE STOPPED.

DRIVE . . . OR I'LL BREAK YOUR NECK.
GOT YOU!


THE TOWER TOOK CRANE OVER THE ELECTRON FENCE.


CRANE WAS PURSUED THROUGH STRANGE SEMI-FROZEN WASTES.
WE ARE GAINING!
I'VE GOT TO STOP THEM SOMEHOW!


THE TOWER LUMBERED UP A PECULIAR VALLEY.



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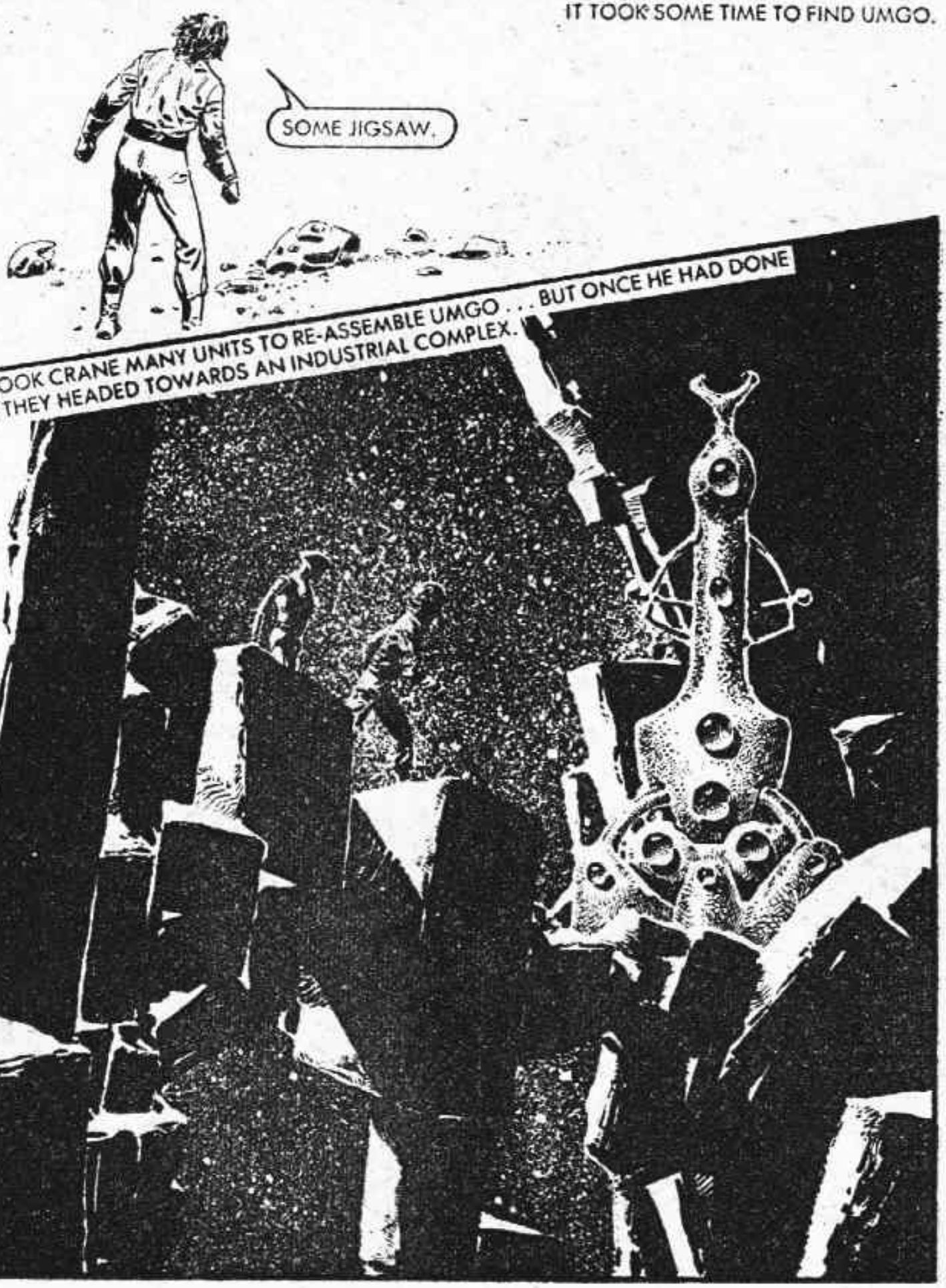
DIE, EARTH SCUM!
THE TOWER ROCKED TOWARDS THE WEB.
CRANE THREW HISMELF OUT AS THE TOWER DISINTEGRATED.

THE TOWERS HAVE HAD IT . . . AND SO HAVE I, BY THE LOOKS OF THINGS.
IT'S CRUSHING ME.

DEATH LOOMED FOR CRANE —
THAT EYE . . . COULD IT BE A PROTON STORE?

ONLY ONE WAY TO FIND OUT.
FOR THE SECOND TIME IN AS MANY MINUTES AN EXPLOSION THREW CRANE TO THE GROUND.
MY HEAD! CONCUSSION PROBABLY. NOW TO FIND UMGO AND PUT HIM TOGETHER AGAIN.

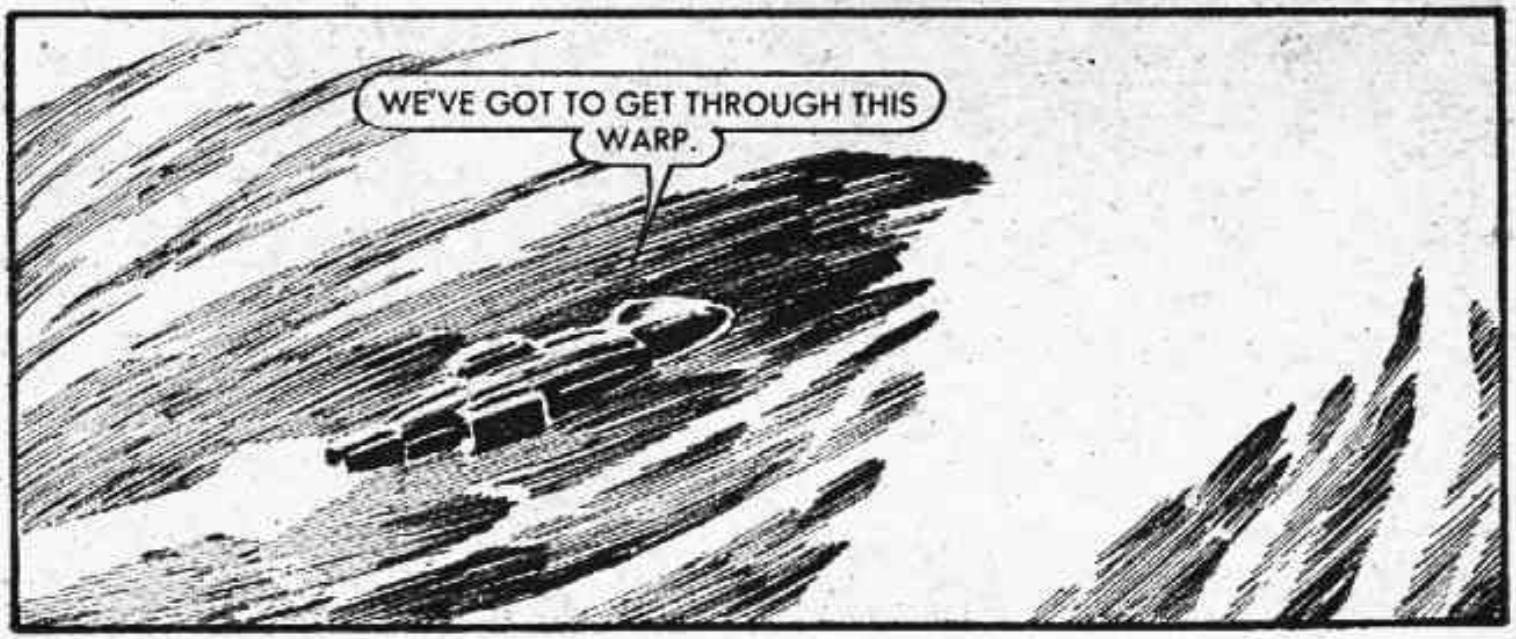
IT TOOK SOME TIME TO FIND UMGO.


SOME JIGSAW.
IT TOOK CRANE MANY UNITS TO RE-ASSEMBLE UMGO . . . BUT ONCE HE HAD DONE
SO THEY HEADED TOWARDS AN INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX.

THIS IS AN AUTOMATIC PLANT. IT REPROCESSES SCRAP INTO COMPLETE MACHINES.
CAN WE USE IT TO REBUILD THE WARPSTRIKER?
THIS MECH-COPIER WILL PRODUCE A BLUEPRINT OF THE UNDAMAGED STRIKER. WE FEED THE BLUEPRINT INTO THE PROCESSOR AND THE RE-CYCLING PLANT SHOULD DO THE REST. THAT IS IF THE WARPSTRIKER PLANS STILL EXIST IN MY DEPLETED CIRCUITS.
THE WARPSTRIKER WAS STILL IN UMGO'S BANKS.
PRODUCTION IS ON TIME.

IT IS FINISHED, CRANE. THE DRIVE HAS BEEN ADAPTED FOR NEUTRINO FUEL AND THEREFORE HAS A LIMITED RANGE.

ON FULL POWER THE CRAFT HEADED FOR SAFETY.


WE'VE GOT TO GET THROUGH THIS WARP.

SHE'S ON FULL BURN, BUT WE'RE STANDING STILL. THE REACTOR WILL OVERLOAD SOON.
BUT WITH A FINAL THRUST THEY SLIPPED FROM THE GALAXY'S CLUTCHES.

CRANE MANAGED TO CONTACT AND BOARD THE ARK ROYAL.
THE LARG ARE DESPERATE FOR OUR NEUTRINOS. IF WE CAN'T STOP THEM, THEY'LL REVIVE THEIR SLEEPING LEGION THEN IT'S THE END FOR US.
IT'S UP TO ARK ROYAL TO STOP THEM—SOMEHOW.
SET A COURSE FOR LARGOS.

THE MIGHTY CARRIER ENTERED THE SPACE WHIRLPOOL.

THE GRAVITATIONAL FORCES SHREDDED THE SAFETY HULL.

WE'RE THERE!
WE'RE ONLY 50% OPERATIONAL. HOW CAN WE STOP THE LARG?

JUPE! OUR EXHAUST NEUTRINOS HAVE REVIVED THE WARRIORS, AND WE ONLY HAVE POWER TO LAUNCH ONE STRIKER.
MY STORE OF ENERGY IS SUFFICIENT TO LAUNCH ANOTHER STRIKE.
NO, UMGO. TWO STRIKERS AGAINST THE WHOLE LARG FLEET CAN'T DO MUCH.

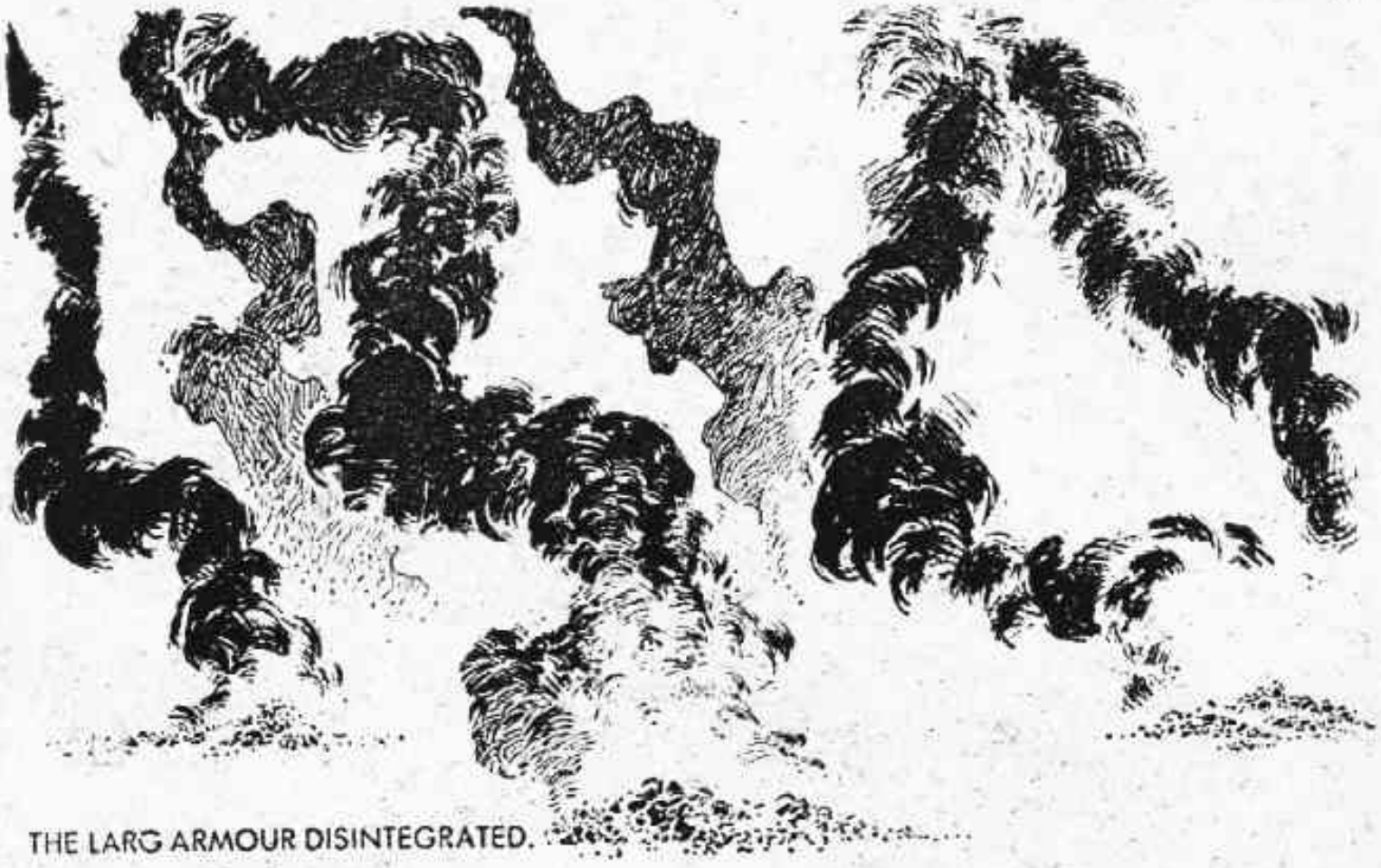
SUICIDE! IT'S GONE ALREADY. OUR LASERS CAN'T PENETRATE THEIR SCREENS.
MAY I OFFER A SOLUTION TO YOUR PROBLEM. COULDN'T WE BUILD ENLARGED COPIES OF THE WASTE DISPENSER UNITS USING THE MECHO-COPIER?
THE ARK ROYAL, SAFE BEHIND ITS DEFENCE SCREENS, WAS BROUGHT DOWN NEXT TO AN AUTOMATIC FACTORY PLANT.
UMGO YOU OLD TIN CAN . . . IT MIGHT JUST WORK.

A WASTE DISPENSER WAS A DEVICE THAT ATOMISED THE RUBBISH ON BOARD SPACECRAFT AND EJECTED THE DUST INTO SPACE.
SIZE INCREASED L (X — Y) TIMES . . . SYSTEM NEARS COMPLETION.
WE MUST NOW PLACE THESE ROUND ARK ROYAL. SENSORS REPORT THE LARG GROUND FORCE IS ADVANCING.
Jeff Nicholson starfourmusic

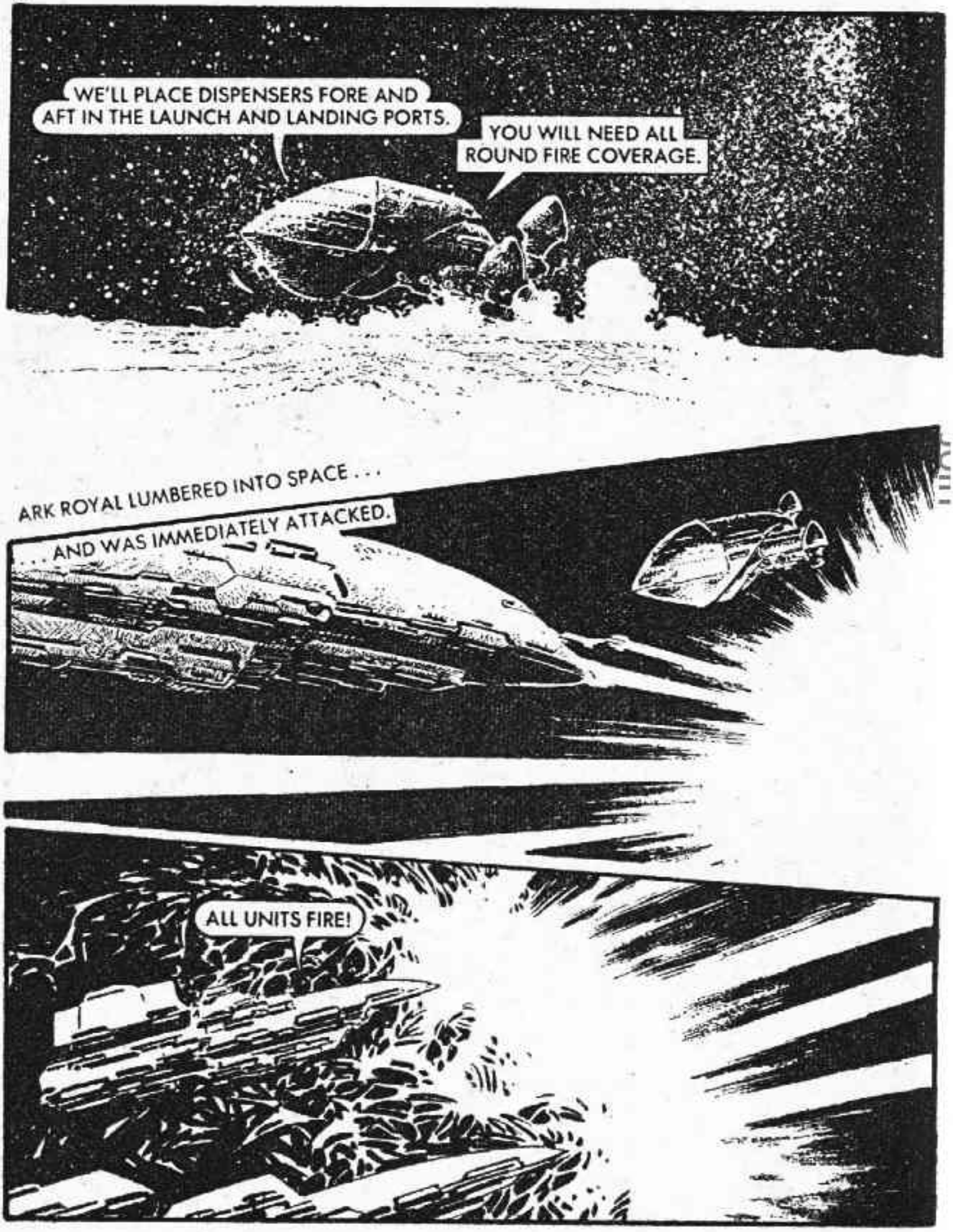
GET THAT DISPENSER IN POSITION.

A WALL OF GIANT DISPENSERS WAS HURRIEDLY PLACED ABOUT ARK ROYAL AS THE ENEMY FORCE APPROACHED.

STEADY NOW. AWAIT MY ORDER.
ACTIVATE!

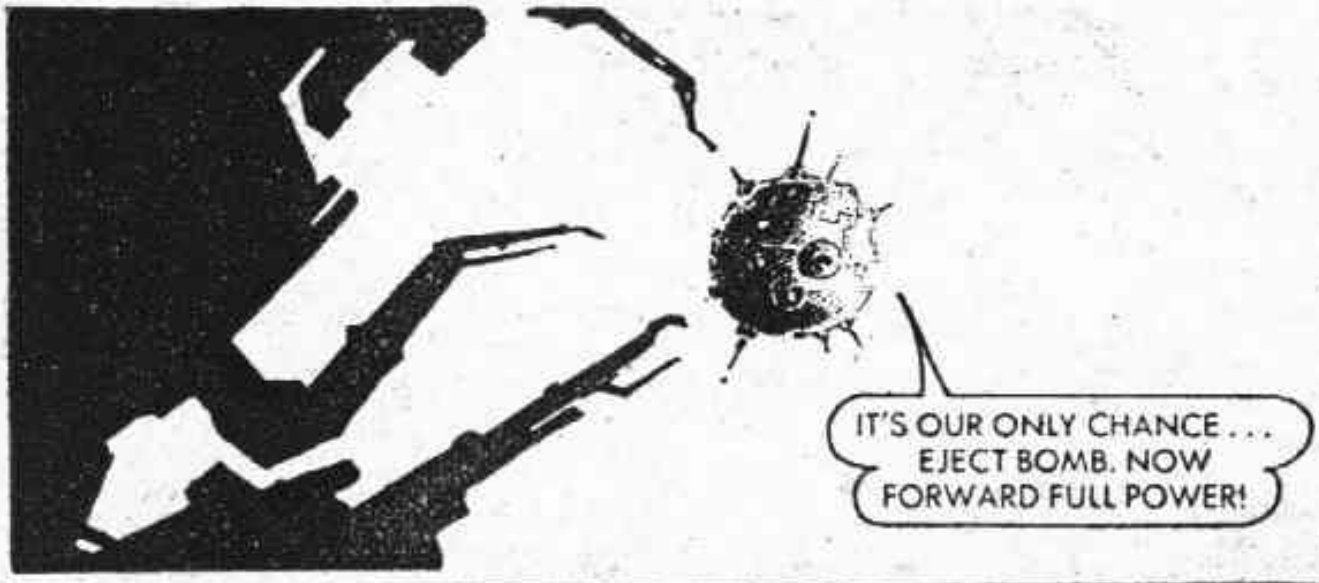


THE LARG ARMOUR DISINTEGRATED.


WE'LL PLACE DISPENSERS FORE AND AFT IN THE LAUNCH AND LANDING PORTS.
YOU WILL NEED ALL ROUND FIRE COVERAGE.
ARK ROYAL LUMBERED INTO SPACE . . .
. . . AND WAS IMMEDIATELY ATTACKED.
ALL UNITS FIRE!

THE ADAPTED DISPENSERS ATOMISED THE LARG CRAFT.
WE'VE GOT TO PULL OURSELVES CLEAR OF THIS ENERGY GALAXY ON HALF POWER REMEMBER.
THAT'S THAT! THE SLEEPING LEGION WILL SOON GO BACK TO SLEEP.

SHE'S NOT GOING TO MAKE IT!
WE'RE BEING SUCKED BACKWARDS!
I WOULD SUGGEST A PROTON BOMB. THE BLAST ASTERN WOULD PUSH US FREE.
THAT MIGHT MEAN THE END OF US AS WELL.


IT'S OUR ONLY CHANCE . . .
EJECT BOMB. NOW
FORWARD FULL POWER!

THE SEARING BLAST OF THE PROTON EXPLOSION TEMPORARILY NEGATED THE COSMIC WHIRLPOOL'S EFFECTS, AND THE ARK ROYAL SURGED FREE.

AS ARK ROYAL HEADED FOR EARTH AT HALF POWER, THE UNSEEN WATCHERS OF THE GALAXY ACKNOWLEDGED THE TERRANS' PART IN FIGHTING THE RELENTLESS BATTLE AGAINST EVIL.

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Japan's first science satellite, Shinsei, or New Star, launched on 28 September 1971. It was designed to make many observations, including the measurement of the solar electromagnetic waves, cosmic rays and plasma in the ionosphere.